

SAF/LLZ (Legislative Research Team)

WATT, Melvin (Democrat)
Representative, 12th District, North Carolina
Elected 1992 to the 103d Congress
Reelected to succeeding Congresses



BACKGROUND

Born: Steele Creek, North Carolina - 26 August 1945
Home: Charlotte, North Carolina
Marital status: Married (Eulada) - 2 children
Religion: Presbyterian
Education: U of North Carolina, B.S., 1967 (Phi Beta Kappa); Yale Law School, J.D., 1970
Military: None
Profession: Lawyer

Political: NC Senate, 1985-7. Defeated Barbara Gore Washington (R) in the Nov92 general election with 72% of the vote for the newly drawn 12th District seat. Reelected in 2000 with 65% of the vote and in 2002 with 65%.

Rep Watt, a liberal, won a seat which the Justice Dept ordered the state legislature to create to encourage minority representation under the Voting Rights Act after population growth gave NC additional House seats. He and 1st District Rep Eva Clayton (D) were the first blacks elected to Congress from North Carolina in nearly 100 years. He has emerged as one of the House's most articulate and forceful liberals and critics of Republican policies (Almanac of American Politics, 1996). In his campaign, advocated cutting the military budget 50 percent over 5 years and using the savings for deficit reduction and domestic programs. He supports tax incentives for economic development, a more aggressive federal role in education and federal funds for drug treatment, law enforcement, mass transit and prenatal care. Supports gun control. Appointed to the Democratic Steering & Policy Cmte on 7Dec92. Indicated that he would watch out for the banking interests of his district, but with a view to protect the consumer. (CQ, 16Jan93) A lawsuit contending that the two minority drawn districts (12th and 1st) are a result of unconstitutional racial gerrymandering went to trial on Mar28 (CQ, 12Mar94, p.622); state Supreme Court declared the districts were legally drawn (LegiSlate, 2Aug94, #57901). During House debate on the budget resolution for FY94, stated his support for the Congressional Black Caucus' alternative because it recognized the need for investing in our communities.

In the 106th Congress, complained that the Armed Services Cmte action on H.R. 2436, to amend the Uniform Code of Military Justice to protect unborn children from assault and murder, subverted the processes of the House using parliamentary procedure. Said "Basically, what we have done is deprive the minority of the Cmte on Armed Services of the right to weigh in on this important issue...." Came under fire for his personal investment in Skyland, one of the companies bidding for a North Carolina radio station whose disputed FM license is being auctioned off by the FCC.

In the 108th Congress, voted "present" to the resolution commending the troops and President for the actions in Iraq. Said while he supported the troops, felt he could not commend the President for his actions.

Additional: Co-owner of an elderly care facility since 1989
AF Bases: Charlotte-Douglas Apt (ANG)

COMMITTEES

FINANCIAL SERVICES -- Subcs on Domestic & Int'l Monetary Policy, Trade and Technology
JUDICIARY -- Subcs on Commercial and Administrative Law, Ranking; Constitution
JOINT ECONOMIC

